

# **THE EVOLUTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

by

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Bachelor of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, 2014

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Katz Graduate School of Business in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2014

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Organizations are field members and respond to the meaning produced within the field. Although a significant body of literature exists concerning institutions and how they influence organizational decision making for actors within the field, less is known about the evolution of measures of organizational performance as a result of the institution and the organizational field. The purpose of this study is to examine how organizational fields produce evolved means of measuring organizational performance. I examine this within the context of collegiate athletics, evaluating the relationship between winning percentages and graduation rates for various athletics programs. I further test this through coding data over a 50 year interval to indicate field expansion. The results suggest that Division I athletic programs are growing in homogeneity. Additionally, the academic support services field is influencing how potential Division I athletes are measuring the performance of athletic programs. This is an illustration of how organizational performance measures evolve as the field matures.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Institutions represent normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive elements that together provide meaning to social life for organizations within an organizational field (Scott, 2014). As institutions emerge, meaning emerges as well, and organizations within the field participate in that meaning (Scott, 1995). The power of the institution is reinforced by normative agents and those in regulative professions, ultimately contributing to the institutions greater influence on field behavior (Scott, 2008). As such, when the institution produces an evolved measure of organizational performance, organizations within the field are subject to the new organizational performance measure.

The term *organizational field* has come to broadly be defined as “a community of organizations that partake of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field” (Scott, 1995, p. 56). These organizational fields are useful for creating an understanding of how common challenges among organizations facilitate dialogue and discussion. Although the organizational field is dynamic in nature and changes over time (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008), those actors in the field share interests and objectives (Hoffman, 1999). While there has been considerable work examining organizational fields and how fields influence behavior, less is known about how measures of organizational performance evolve as a result of the institution and concerns within the organizational field.

As a result of previous work, we already know a great deal about organizational fields. Within an organizational field, meaning is produced by institutions, which possess regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements to guide behavior (Scott, 2014). Additionally, as institutions produce meaning, organizations can compete over the definition of various issues to control behavior within the field (Brint & Karabel, 1991). Moreover, as institutional rules emerge, organizations will incorporate these rules into their structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Lastly, as a result of the institution, organizations within the field partake in activities that are perceived to have symbolic legitimacy, even if some behaviors conflict with economic goals (Suddaby, 2010). Institutions and fields largely influence organizational behavior, but they also likely influence the measures of organizational performance.

The purpose of this project is to explore how organizational fields produce evolved means of measuring performance. Specifically, I examine this within the context of collegiate athletics. I begin by covering literature within the area of organizational fields to frame the issue of collegiate athletics within the existing theory. I then go over a brief history of the NCAA and various policies that have largely impacted collegiate athletics. Next, I describe the research methods for the project, which include data collection and assessment criteria. Lastly, I discuss the results, unique insights, and implications.



## **2.0 ORGANIZATIONAL FIELDS LITERATURE**

*“Accounting for social change and social order is one of the enduring problems of social science”* (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Indeed, both change and order are important elements of organizational fields. As it pertains to this project, the organizational fields literature can be structured into three categories: power players, emergent organizations, and unintended consequences. Power players is central because power relates to the ability of actors in the field to counteract undesirable behavior (Jepperson, 1991). Regarding emergent organizations, Scott suggests that a community of organizations is a strong indication of the existence of an organizational field (Scott, 1995). And while fields exist as a result of an institutional purpose (Scott, 2014), the unintended consequences category indicates what outcomes emerge that are not strictly related to the issue that is defined by its actors and central to the existence of the field (Hoffman, 1999).

### **2.1 POWER PLAYERS**

Power is an integral component of organizational fields, as it relates to the ability to exert force in maintaining institutions (Lawrence, 2008). The relationship between power and institutions has been well studied (Lawrence, 2008), and this is a helpful place to begin the examination of organizational fields. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe structuration of the institution as

having four parts: increased interaction between organizations in the organizational field, the emergence of distinct interorganizational structures and patterns of coalition, an increase in the volume of information that organizations in the field must contend, and the creation of mutual awareness of those in the field that they participate in similar enterprise. Organizational behavior within the organizational field is ultimately guided by the institution, and by using their regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements, institutions give social life meaning (Scott, 2008).

In order to ensure that institutions maintain their meaning and power, institutional agents work to define, interpret, and enforce various institutional elements (Scott, 2008). Two terms in particular relate to the discussion of power: normative agents and regulative professions. Normative agents are those agents that indicate and communicate to those in the field what they *should* do (Scott, 2008). To cite a practical case, the researchers at The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws have been pressuring the federal government for years to legalize marijuana, pointing out the opportunity for incremental tax revenue and the exorbitantly high costs of marijuana prohibition, in spite of continued wide spread illegal use (Yu, 2005). Another instance of normative agents would be proponents of open-source software in the education sphere, pointing out to university administrators that free internet-based educational products are viable, worthwhile investments (Rooij, 2006). This has implications for power because it suggests that an implicit expectation or explicit pressure, when strong enough, can create a sense of obligation in spite of the fact that there is no absolute imperative requiring the behavior to be done.

Regulative professions are actors in the field that have access to the use of coercive powers (Scott, 2008). They identify and communicate to those in the organizational field what

they *must* do. To cite an example, policy makers at the Environmental Protection Agency would be considered to be in regulative professions. These policy makers create universal requirements for air quality that all states must comply with (Collins, 2007). The concept of regulative professions has implications for power because these actors create a universal mandate for all organizations in the organizational field, thereby shifting the power distribution to favor those in regulative professions. DiMaggio and Powell describe these institutional agents as “great rationalizers”, ultimately using their power to drive change across the organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). To summarize, institutions emerge and create meaning, organizations within the organizational field interpret and participate in the institution’s meaning, and institutional agents reinforce the power of the institution and its related elements.

## **2.2 EMERGENT ORGANIZATIONS**

Once an institution emerges and an organizational field is established, there is a significant opportunity for growth in the number of organizations within the organizational field. Fields emerge around a central issue (Hoffman, 1999), and as the issue grows in attention and importance, the field may experience growth as well. Meyer and Bromley note the growth of organizations in all sectors, and they attribute this growth to three key elements. If organizational fields are part of a global business environment, then they too become increasingly populous as the business environment becomes increasingly dense (Meyer & Bromley, 2013).

Their first element for the growth is increased scientization. This process can be described as an increased interest in the scientific study of subject matter that was previously considered to be of marginal importance. Moreover, these sciences carry global legitimacy, providing backing and support for many issues that governments or regulating entities are slow or perhaps unwilling to respond to (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Meyer and Jepperson (2000) note the widespread interest in integrating science with legal/moral principles, subsequently creating various social movements. As it pertains to organizational fields, the increase in scientization allows for the ease of various actors to group around an issue and produce an institution of meaning and power that members of the organizational field will be subject to. In the context of support services for student athletes, scientization means that individuals and policy makers can highlight the academic underperformance of student athletes by studying graduation rates, retention rates, reading level, etc. The importance of scientization for organizational fields is that it allows for ample opportunity for the importance of the issue in question to be demonstrated by science, irrespective of sentiment surrounding the issue (Meyer & Bromley, 2013).

The second element is increased rights to the individual. This is evidenced by an increased interest by policy makers in producing legislation that is specific to a narrow population of individuals (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Whereas individuals were broadly identified previously as employees or part of a corporate group, now various policies are intended for women, minorities, homosexuals, the handicapped, etc. This shift seems to be taking place globally, as individuals come to realize they are empowered and deserve to have their rights respected (Gan, 2012). Improved rights for individuals greatly improved the relationship between employee and employer and also reshaped the power dynamic (Jepperson

& Meyer, 1991). As it pertains to collegiate athletics, increased rights for individuals may have contributed largely to the proliferation of academic support services for college athletes to satisfy their rights as students. The result of increased individual rights is significant growth in the number of rights that need to be accounted for, increasing the number of total organizations needed to satisfy those rights (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Increased rights for individuals too has implications for organizational fields because it means actors now feel entitled to policy that represents them (or others) and they expect a response when they voice their interests.

The third element is growth in education, which came about with increased globalization (Meyer & Bromley, 2013). Individuals are educated at colleges and universities that place a heavy emphasis on scientization and individual empowerment. This reinforces the interest in issues previously marginalized and policy that meets self interests (or the interests of others). The link between growth in education and academic support services is that virtually all student athletes are taking classes that focus especially on scientization, with a large number of classmates that feel empowered to exercise their rights. In the past, student athletes may have been content *only* receiving scholarship money, even if they were underperforming in classes, but that is not likely to be the case anymore. Growth in education relates to organizational fields in that the enormous growth in education and the subsequent growth in students creates a population of people that are both scientific and interested in rights/empowerment. Together, these three elements drive growth in the number of organizations in all sectors. Additionally, they allow for a more thorough understanding of organizational fields.

## 2.3 UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

One particularly important area concerning organizational fields, and perhaps an area that hasn't received as much attention, is unintended consequences that come as a result of the emergence of an organizational field. Unintended consequences are easily identified by reconciling the purpose of the agent(s) with the aggregate outcome of the action(s) of the agent(s) (Cortell & Peterson, 2001). In the context of support services for student athletes, the unintended consequences would be any outcome that is produced as a result of creating a greater focus on academics within collegiate athletics. Considering unintended consequences is especially useful for understanding how the academic support services field has evolved over time because the existence of unintended consequences may mean that new actors are becoming part of the field as a result of having a vested interest in various field issues. As organizations come together to participate in the common meaning of their organizational field (Lawrence, 2008), certain unintended outcomes are realized as they pursue objectives.

Observable instances are diverse. In the area of property law, increased legislation for moral rights have been pushed by artists and subsequently passed by the government, but as a result of doing so, the act of rightfully purchasing a work of art is significantly *less* appealing to a prospective owner, since they have less power in spite of the fact the art now belongs to them (Mills, 2011). In healthcare, the Labour Party in New Zealand has successfully implemented their reformed healthcare program to reduce co-payments and expand primary-care services, but this has resulted in a more complex funding process for healthcare providers as well as a significant shift in power from the government to physicians (Gauld, 2008).

The unintended consequences of an organizational field emerging can also be demonstrated by various social movements that have recently taken place. To cite an example,

the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011 produced an organizational field especially interested in income inequality in the United States, but an unintended consequence of government programs intended to redistribute income is the appeal of receiving income without actually working. Indeed, one study showed increases in “poverty” with increases in welfare spending (Roots, 2004). Overseas, the Arab Springs movement in 2010 produced an organizational field centralized around political reform. The results are increased instability for Israel and all of its neighboring countries, in addition to a form of democracy with strong elements of Islam (Turner, 2012). The literature demonstrates that although organizational fields emerge and are subject to the meaning of an institution, there are unintended consequences that will emerge as these organizational fields continue to exist.

## **2.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Intercollegiate athletics initially emerged with minimal governance and was largely coordinated by students and alumni (Sloan, 2005). The students played the role of athletes, and they represented their various universities in intercollegiate match ups. The alumni played the role of athletic administrators, coaches, and even sponsors (Sherman, 2008). Indeed, in the 1870s, collegiate athletics did not appear to be consistent with the mission of higher education, and the funding for most sports usually came from external sources (Sherman, 2008). Since alumni were frequently donors as well as coaches, this created an expectation among student athletes to value and pursue winning above anything else.

Without a governing body, the integrity of collegiate athletics soon began to face more and more challenges. With no formal governance in place, many students were exploited,

exclusively or primarily, for their athletic capability (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000). In some instances, student athletes would graduate from a university without even knowing how to read (Rosen, 2000). In other cases, individuals known as “tramp athletes” jumped from school to school exclusively for the purpose of playing various sports (Hakim, 2000). Additionally, with no governing body for athletics, there were very few rules of play for collegiate teams. This made participation in some sports incredibly dangerous. In 1905 alone, there were 18 deaths and 145 serious injuries as a result of football (Burns, 1985). Lastly, as collegiate athletics grew in popularity, it became increasingly more commercial, threatening the idea of amateurism. In 1893, in return for playing on the team, one Yale football player was offered the following: his tuition waived by the university, a suite of rooms and free meals at the University Club, a \$100 scholarship, a share of profits from game day sales, and an all-expense paid, ten day vacation to Cuba after football season (Franey, 2013). Without governance, the longevity of collegiate athletics was in jeopardy.

#### **2.4.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NCAA**

In response to the various challenges facing collegiate athletics, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States was established in 1906 (later to be renamed the NCAA). Since its establishment, the NCAA has been committed to defending the integrity of collegiate sports, as well as the integrity of the relationship between universities and their student athletes. In its early years, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) did not pursue control of collegiate athletics. Instead, it desired to generate recommendations for its member schools (Sherman, 2008). Even so, most schools were not particularly willing to forfeit any of their power to a governing body. Additionally, the IAAUS did not have especially strong



credibility among the nation's best schools, and as a result, the organization did not fare well in its early years. Gradually, the NCAA grew in size, from 62 member schools in 1906 to 105 member schools just 15 years later (McQueen, 1992). The IAAUS officially adopted the name NCAA in 1910 (Franey, 2013).

While the NCAA was the governing body for collegiate athletics during the early 1900s, it initially served as a *discussion group* (Patberg, 2002). It was not until 1947 that the NCAA developed its first comprehensive policy: "Principles for the Conduct of Intercollegiate Athletics" (Sherman, 2008). The policy, which came to be known as the Sanity Code, stressed holding athletes to the same academic standards as the rest of the student body and maintaining amateurism (Shropshire, 1997). Further, NCAA membership later passed a resolution giving the NCAA power to implement and enforce the Sanity Code. The policy added a fact finding committee to the other NCAA committees, specifically for the purpose of auditing schools and investigating breaches of policy (Burns, 1985). Universities that did not follow the Sanity Code were expelled from the NCAA. The Sanity Code was a major step in the NCAA establishing itself as the governing body for collegiate athletics.

#### **2.4.2 INCREASING ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

For the remainder of the 1900s, the NCAA started to place a much greater emphasis on academics. In 1952, the NCAA added a requirement for all student athletes to make normal progress toward a degree (Burns, 1985). "Normal progress" was defined by each of the member schools. The NCAA added to this rule in 1957, declaring that athletes could take no less than 12 hours per semester or quarter and athletes were not permitted to participate for more than 10 semesters or 15 quarters (approximately 5 years). In the 60s, the NCAA decided to address the

“dumb jock” stigma that emerged around collegiate athletics in the 1930s (Fenton, 2006). The NCAA consulted experts to study how to improve its academic standards and the effects of doing so, and the resulting policy was the 1.6 rule. As its name may suggest, the 1.6 rule affected NCAA member schools in that they were required to limit awarding scholarships to student athletes that were predicted to earn a college GPA of at least 1.6 on a 4.0 scale (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000). This was the first of many controversial policies that the NCAA would subsequently pass. The policy received a great deal of attention as a result of its impact on the Ivy League schools. All 8 schools refused to abide by the rules on the grounds that their schools do not utilize special admission standards for student athletes, and for more than a year they remained out of the NCAA post season (Burns, 1985).

Shortly after being implemented, in 1973 the 1.6 rule was abolished and replaced with the 2.0 rule (Hunt, 2000). While the 1.6 rule focused on predictive methods to determine future academic success, the 2.0 rule focused more on an athlete’s previous performance as a student. The new policy required NCAA member schools to limit their scholarships to students who graduated from high school with at least a 2.0 overall GPA. It also limited scholarships that were awarded after a candidate’s freshman year to candidates that were making satisfactory progress towards a degree. A few years later, the NCAA created specific standards for “satisfactory progress” and required schools to publish their progress as a requirement for NCAA membership (Taylor & Traub, 2000).

The 2.0 rule was very well received by some for its simplicity. As compared with the 1.6 rule that used an ambiguous (and perhaps subjective) formula to try and predict college GPA, the 2.0 rule was rather easy to use and understand. It was controversial, however, as a result of an overreliance on high school performance (Waller, 2003). Critics pointed out that different high

schools across the country had very different standards for grading. Additionally, if high school GPA was the *only* factor that determined eligibility to receive athletic scholarships, high school administrators could take advantage of the system (or feel pressured to do so) by inflating the grades of students that were not initially eligible (Waller, 2003).

### **2.4.3 POWER PLAYERS**

Throughout the history of collegiate athletics, various parties have participated in the struggle for power. On the university side, various administrators have attempted to usurp governance. Perhaps the earliest example of this was at Princeton in 1881 when a group of faculty members came together to form the first faculty athletic committee (Patberg, 2002). Shortly after, Harvard created a similar committee for faculty members. The committee at Harvard would subsequently recommend to the university that their participation in football should be discontinued altogether. Prior to the creation of the NCAA, athletics programs were primarily governed by the alumni and student athletes of the university (Sherman, 2008). After the creation of the NCAA, although the organization governed member schools with various policies and penalties, it was athletic directors at each university that were considered to be in control (Rose, 1991). Since collegiate athletics was not even considered to be consistent with the mission of higher education, university presidents had no place in athletic affairs (Sherman, 2008). Even so, with the NCAA making it clear in the latter part of the 20th century the congruence they expected between athletics and academics, there were more opportunities for university presidents to participate in developing policy (Covell & Barr, 2001).

In the 1980s, three events of particular importance took place. The first was the development of the NCAA's Proposition 48 (Mondello & Abernethy, 2000). This new policy

added to the strength of the 2.0 rule by adding a minimum SAT score of 700 out of 1600 or an ACT score of 57 out of 144 (Waller, 2003). The second was the creation of the NCAA President's Commission. This Commission was a group of Presidents within the NCAA governance structure that would serve as an advisory board (Freedman, 2002). Their participation in reform was greatly aided by the instatement of a new NCAA executive director in 1987, Richard Schultz, who desired more input from presidents (Patberg, 2002). The President's Commission frequently brought issues before the NCAA and directly influenced how new policy was shaped, including an amendment to NCAA policy in 1986 to create more flexibility regarding eligibility for student athletes (Covell & Barr, 2001). The third was the creation of the Knight Foundation Commission in 1989. This organization was created for the purpose of studying ways to reform collegiate athletics (Patberg, 2002). The initial 21 member commission included over ten university presidents as well as Richard Schultz, the serving executive director of the NCAA (Marino, 2002). The Knight Commission was very well represented within the NCAA, with five members serving in senior positions. These relationships were integral in ensuring that policy makers were aware of the Knight Commission's research and recommendations. The influence of the Knight Commission was demonstrated in 1996 when the NCAA adopted a governance structure that gave university presidents and chancellors final authority over their athletics programs, following a Knight Commission report (Patberg, 2002). The President's Commission, the Knight Commission, and the NCAA were all significant contributors to policy that would ultimately govern member schools.

#### **2.4.4 PROPOSITION 16**

Under pressure from the President's Commission, the NCAA revised its Proposition 48 and replaced it with Proposition 16 (Covell & Barr, 2001). Like its predecessors, Proposition 16 was intended to improve graduation rates and maintain academic integrity within collegiate athletics. This policy brought about two major changes. First, it increased the number of core high school courses required for scholarship eligibility from 11 to 13. The second was the use of a sliding scale, which created greater flexibility for eligibility. Although students were still required to have a minimum GPA of 2.0 for their high school core classes, Proposition 16's scale balanced a student's GPA with test scores (Waller, 2003). This enabled for students with low GPA's to be eligible by performing well on their standardized test, and vice versa. The sliding scale is represented in Appendix A. There are two distinct outcomes as a result of proposition 16 and its predecessors: emergent organizations to support student athletes that have been admitted to the university and a number of unintended consequences that exist as a result of using Proposition 16 to govern NCAA member schools.

#### **2.4.5 EMERGENT ORGANIZATIONS**

After the NCAA began to introduce policy on academics, student services professionals began to realize that student athletes were a unique population on campus and they had the capacity to benefit from unique services (Figler, 1987). Student athletes are frequently academically, emotionally, or culturally underprepared for college, which increases their risk of performing poorly (Fenton, 2006). Academic support service programs for athletes are established for the purpose of enhancing the potential for student athletes to graduate (Burton, 1992). Prior to 1972,

less than 40% of universities offered such support services to their athletes, but in the 1980s the demand for winning programs and athletes who would remain eligible created a strong need for such offerings (Dillman, 2008).

There is significant variability between universities regarding the academic support services they offer athletes. Some provide services to all athletes while others only offer services to athletes in revenue-generating sports (football & basketball). Some programs have an entire staff while others have a designated individual to assume most or all responsibility for the function (Swann, 1989). The services offered usually include but are not limited to course scheduling, academic advising, personal counseling, career counseling, remedial reading, and tutoring. It is likely that as the NCAA continues to govern member schools with more policy on academics, these support service programs will continue to transform to meet the needs of their student athletes.

#### **2.4.6 UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

Heightened standards for eligibility for college-bound scholarship recipients have had a disproportionately high impact on the African American population as well as the learning disabled population. Regarding disqualifying African Americans, Proposition 16's SAT score requirement has especially been a point of contention. A study by the US Department of Education determined that only 67% of African American college bound student athletes met the minimum SAT score requirement, compared to 91% for white students (Taylor & Traub, 2000). To add to the controversy, it is not readily clear if these policies are actually increasing graduation rates. If Proposition 48 was used in 1981, close to 70% of black male athletes would have been disqualified, but 54% of those athletes still graduated, so the majority were still

capable in spite of not meeting the standards of Proposition 48 (Shropshire, 1997). It is also believed that even though graduation rates among African American student athletes has increased, many of those athletes are *not* economically underprivileged, suggesting economically disadvantaged African American high school students are still being disqualified from participation (Oates, 2000).

Regarding college bound student athletes with learning disabilities, the US Justice Department in 1997 found the NCAA in violation of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act, with only 29% of learning-disabled students being granted full eligibility, compared to 71% for non learning-disabled students (Lewis, 1998). Recall that Proposition 16 includes a requirement for 13 core classes in high school, but the policy does *not* include remedial or special education courses in the count for the 13 classes (Weston, 1998). This makes it especially difficult for learning-disabled students to graduate from high school with NCAA scholarship eligibility. As a result, most learning disabled students are disqualified from participation in Division I sports because they do not meet the eligibility requirements. Numerous lawsuits have been brought against the NCAA for discriminating against college bound student athletes that are learning disabled or of minority status.

After one particularly high profile case, Pryor vs. the NCAA, the NCAA modified Proposition 16 and put the new version into effect in 2003. The revised version still uses a table very similar to the one for Proposition 16 but serves more to play off the strengths of each individual student. For instance, a student with a GPA of 3.55 could score as low as a combined score of 400 on the SAT, and students with a combined SAT score of 1010 could have a GPA as low as 2.0 and still be eligible (Burns, 1985).

## 2.5 SUMMARY

Within the literature for organizational fields, power, growth in organizations, and unintended consequences are the areas that are most pertinent to this project. Power provides a deeper understanding of how institutions influence behavior (Scott, 2008). Growth in organizations directly relates to growth in organizational fields, and the unintended consequences literature highlights how at least some outcomes that occur as a result of field existence are not the outcomes intended by field actors. This research is intended to answer the following questions:

- What historical events were the largest contributors to the rapid diffusion in the past five decades of academic support services programs?
- How has the academic support services field evolved over time?
- What patterns (if any) exist between winning percentage and graduation rates?



### **3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH METHODS**

##### **3.1.1 DATA COLLECTION**

The data collected includes the graduation rates for football and basketball programs, the winning percentages for football and basketball programs, and the year that each university established academic support services for athletes. The NCAA currently has a database of graduation rates and winning percentages for the sports teams of each member school, and this was utilized to retrieve the graduation rates and winning percentages for both Atlantic Coastal Conference (ACC) schools and Pacific 12 (Pac-12) schools for football and basketball. The year the academic support program was established was retrieved directly from administrators of the program at each school. A total of 27 schools were contacted to determine when their academic support programs were established, and a total of 21 schools responded. Lack of responsiveness is the primary reason data was not collected for the remaining six schools. The ACC and Pac-12 conferences were selected because they represent a sample of schools that are geographically disparate (East coast and West coast respectively) and strong in their academics. Appendix B includes the member schools for each conference. Graduation rates and winning percentages were only collected for football and basketball teams because these have historically been recognized as the significant revenue-producing sports for athletics programs. Additionally,

these teams have the greatest percentage of at-risk minority students playing on their team. This means these sports have an especially strong focus on winning, and there is a particularly strong challenge in graduating students.

### **3.1.2 MEASURES**

In order to address my research questions, data for graduation rates and winning percentage were collected. Graduation rates serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of the academic support services program for the team in question. Effective support programs will have graduation rates that trend upward over time, although the effectiveness of each individual program will vary with other schools in the dataset. The winning percentage serves as an indicator of team performance. Better performing teams will produce a higher winning percentage.

## **3.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis performed on the data was primarily intended to answer the question of whether or not there is a relationship between winning percentages, graduation rates, and the existence of academic support programs for athletes. I first used a binary code (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to study the growth of academic support services over the past five decades. Appendix C includes a timeline of the schools in the sample that responded and when their athletic programs began offering academic support services. Appendix D shows the growth in the total percentage of schools offering support programs for athletes from 1964 to 2014 for the 21 programs that

responded. Appendix E and Appendix F show the growth in the percentage of schools with programs, of those that responded, for ACC schools and Pac12 schools respectively. Next, the average winning percentage and graduation rates were calculated for all schools for football and basketball to determine if any relationship exists. The graph is shown in Appendix G. Additionally, the average graduation rates and winning percentage were calculated and compared for the ACC and Pac-12. The rates for football are in Appendix H, and the rates for basketball are in Appendix I. As a means for better identifying the relationship between academics and team performance, winning percentage was directly compared to graduation rates. For the graph in Appendix J, the median *graduation rate* was calculated for the total sample, and the average *winning percentage* was taken for schools that had graduation rates above or below the median graduation rates. This was done for both football and basketball teams. For the graph in Appendix K, the median *winning percentage* was calculated for the total sample, and the average *graduation rate* was taken for schools that had graduation rates above and below median winning percentage. This was done for both football and basketball teams. This methodology controls for the significant variance concerning performance for both graduation rates and winning percentage that exist for the sample. Since the NCAA started collecting and publishing graduation rates the 1998-1999 academic year, the first year in the data set is 2004-2005 (the NCAA allots up to 6 years from matriculation for student athletes to graduate).

## **4.0 RESULTS**

The data from the study can be analyzed to make inferences regarding patterns concerning the relationship between winning percentage and graduation rate. Interesting patterns are revealed among football program versus basketball programs, the schools from the ACC versus the schools from Pac-12, and when considering schools that are high versus low in winning percentage and high versus low in graduation rates.

In terms of patterns among football versus basketball programs, Appendix G shows the average outcomes in winning percentage and graduation rate for football programs and the average outcomes in winning percentage and graduation rate for basketball programs in the study. Specifically for basketball teams, there may be a negative relationship between winning and graduation rates for basketball programs for the schools in the sample over the specified time interval.

It is also possible to assess the average outcomes in the respective athletic conferences included in the study by comparing the winning percentage and graduation rates among the ACC schools versus the Pac-12 schools. Appendix H shows this cross-conference comparison for football programs and Appendix I depicts this cross-conference comparison for basketball programs. Notably, ACC football teams seem to consistently graduate a greater percentage of their student-athletes than their PAC-12 counterparts. Also, ACC basketball teams graduate a higher percentage of their student-athletes than schools in the Pac-12. This is especially

interesting because the ACC basketball teams also had a higher winning percentage over the specified time interval as well.

Moving beyond the cross-conference comparison, it is also interesting to consider the athletic performance of schools that are high in graduation rate versus schools that are low in graduation rate. Appendix J shows this comparison for football programs that are high and low in graduation rates and displays this comparison for basketball programs that are high and low in graduation rate. This appears to convey that football teams which graduate a greater percentage of student-athletes seem to have a lower winning percentage than teams that graduate a lower percentage of student-athletes. The opposite appears to be true for basketball teams, as teams with a higher graduation rate tend to have a higher winning percentage than teams that graduate a lower percentage of student-athletes.

Finally, it is reasonable to assess the academic performance of schools that have high winning percentages versus schools that have low winning percentages. Appendix K demonstrates the distinction between schools with a graduation rate above the median and schools with a graduation rate below the median. In particular, football teams that have a higher winning percentage also seem to have a higher graduation rate than teams with a lower winning percentage. A similar relationship appears to exist for basketball teams.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

Recall that my research questions were to identify the contributors to the rapid diffusion of academic support services, how the field has evolved over time, and any relationship that may exist between graduation rates and winning percentages. My analysis included the diffusion of the programs among the ACC and Pac-12 schools in the sample (Appendix D, Appendix E, and Appendix F), a comparison of graduation rates and winning percentage for all schools in the sample (Appendix G, Appendix H, and Appendix I), and evaluation of the winning percentages and graduation rates for schools based on how well they graduate or win (Appendix J and Appendix K).

I have three key insights concerning the results. The first is concerning *power players*. Institutional meaning appears to be defined by those field actors with the most power. The NCAA Presidents Commission, the Knight Foundation, and the NCAA are the power players in the academic support services field. Together, they collectively produce the meaning of the institution that will ultimately guide the behavior of the actors in the academic support services field (Scott, 2014). This is an especially interesting finding because one of the power players, the NCAA Presidents Commission, represents a group of individuals with a direct stake in university academics (Freedman, 2002). Given the vested interest these university presidents have in maintaining the academic integrity of their respective universities, it is fitting for them to play such a central role in defining the institutional meaning of an organizational field concerned

primarily with improving the academic performance of athletes. As demonstrated by the graphs with graduation rates in Appendix G, Appendix H, and Appendix I, graduation rates are trending upward for both football and basketball teams across both conferences. The Presidents Commission, along with the other power players, is ultimately producing the institutional meaning that is driving the behavior of academic support programs, perhaps even to the extent of their improved performance in assisting in graduating student athletes.

My second insight is pertaining to *emergent organizations*. The diffusion of academic support programs for student athletes may serve as a signaling activity. Consider the graphs in Appendix D, Appendix E, and Appendix F. There has been significant growth in the establishment of academic support programs at Division I schools. The research done by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) may imply that this is occurring as a result of field structuration. As organizational fields become established and more defined, there is increased homogenization among the organizations in the field. In the case of the academic support services field, more and more universities are offering academic support services, making universities more homogenous and signaling an indication of where the field is moving in the future. This signaling serves as an indicator to those outside the field that collegiate athletics is beginning to focus more on academics, and it serves as an indicator to actors in the field, particularly universities, that academic performance is now going to be a central component to athletics programs.

My third insight is pertaining to *unintended consequences*. The emergence of the academic support services field may be radically changing how athletics programs distinguish and build the brand of their programs, as well as how they compete for talent. As indicated by the graph in Appendix K that compares basketball teams with winning percentages above and

below the median for the sample, it would seem programs that win more graduate a *higher* percentage of their athletes. Moreover, the graphs in Appendix J appear to make a similar point. Football teams with a higher winning percentage appear to graduate a *higher* percentage of their athletes. The Appendix K graph for basketball demonstrates a similar trend. These findings conflict largely with the belief that winning comes at the expense of compromising academics (Rosen, 2000). This may mean that athletics programs now have an additional means of building their brand. In the past, athletics programs would have had to choose between graduating athletes or winning as a team, because the two objectives were believed to be at odds with one another (Rosen, 2000). The graphs in Appendix J and Appendix K may be indicating a shift. Athletics programs can now build their brands and distinguish themselves by having winning teams *and* graduating their athletes. Moreover, this shift will affect how athletics programs compete for talent. Formerly, athletics programs would have been evaluated based on having winning teams *or* graduating athletes. This shift means athletic programs may actually be perceived as *less* appealing if they do not graduate athletes and possess winning teams.

There are limitations, however, to the study that was done. The rate of graduation for student athletes is perhaps one of many possible metrics for evaluating academic performance for this particular student population. Additionally, the graphs evaluating the relationship between winning percentage and graduation rates only include 9 years of data. In order to get a better understanding of the relationship, data needs to be evaluated over a longer time interval. Moreover, it may be unreasonable to conclude that a program is not graduating students because it has a high winning percentage. Even with the existence of an academic support services program, service offerings must be appropriately matched with the needs of the student athletes.



Failing to do so would mean that graduation rates will not improve considerably, in spite of the fact academic services are being offered.

There are alternative explanations that exist for some of the findings for this study. Regarding Appendix K, one intuitive explanation would be that winning programs graduate more athletes because they have more money to invest in their academic support services program. In such a case, to say that teams that win more graduate students at a higher rate would be misleading. The finding instead would be that athletics programs that have more money tend to outperform athletics programs with less money in both graduation rates and winning percentage, meaning that student athletes that want the most from their athletics programs accept the offer with the athletics program that has the most money. This has less to do with the brand or reputation of the program and more to do with having the finances to drive strong performance in both academics and athletics. A second possible explanation is that improved graduation rates will not improve how athletic programs compete for talent at all. To say a higher graduation rate makes an athletics program more competitive is to assume a high probability of graduation is something a student athlete would find valuable. If not, than a program that excels in both winning and graduating athletes would not necessarily be any more appealing than a program that only performs well in winning. In the future, work should be done concerning the discrepancy in service offerings across different schools, the academic capability of the student athletes of each program, and the relationship between financial backing and the effectiveness of the athletics program to win and graduate students.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

As this study indicates, academic support services have been diffusing rapidly across schools the past several decades. The emergence of the institution for the academic support services field has established meaning for behavior in the field (Scott, 2014). Additionally, the increasing attention to both athletic and academic performance illustrates that these evolved standards of performance have diffused throughout the field. This evolved measure of organizational performance is reinforced by both normative agents and those in regulative professions, both of which contribute to the homogeneity of the field. This work provides a broader understanding of the application of organizational field concepts and an improved understanding of the relationship between institutions, field actors, and organizational behavior.

## APPENDIX A

### PROPOSITION 16 SLIDING SCALE

| Core<br>GPA | SAT | ACT |
|-------------|-----|-----|
| 2<br>.5     | 700 | 17  |
| 2<br>.475   | 710 | 18  |
| 2<br>.45    | 720 | 18  |
| 2<br>.425   | 730 | 18  |
| 2<br>.4     | 740 | 18  |
| 2           |     |     |

|                  |     |    |
|------------------|-----|----|
| .375             | 750 | 18 |
| $\frac{2}{.35}$  | 760 | 19 |
| $\frac{2}{.325}$ | 770 | 19 |
| $\frac{2}{.3}$   | 780 | 19 |
| $\frac{2}{.275}$ | 790 | 19 |
| $\frac{2}{.25}$  | 800 | 19 |
| $\frac{2}{.225}$ | 810 | 20 |
| $\frac{2}{.2}$   | 820 | 20 |
| $\frac{2}{.175}$ | 830 | 20 |
| $\frac{2}{.15}$  | 840 | 20 |
| $\frac{2}{.125}$ | 850 | 20 |
| $\frac{2}{.1}$   | 860 | 21 |
| $\frac{2}{.075}$ | 870 | 21 |
| $\frac{2}{.05}$  | 880 | 21 |
| $\frac{2}{.025}$ | 890 | 21 |
| 2                | 900 | 21 |

## APPENDIX B

### ACC & PAC12 SCHOOLS

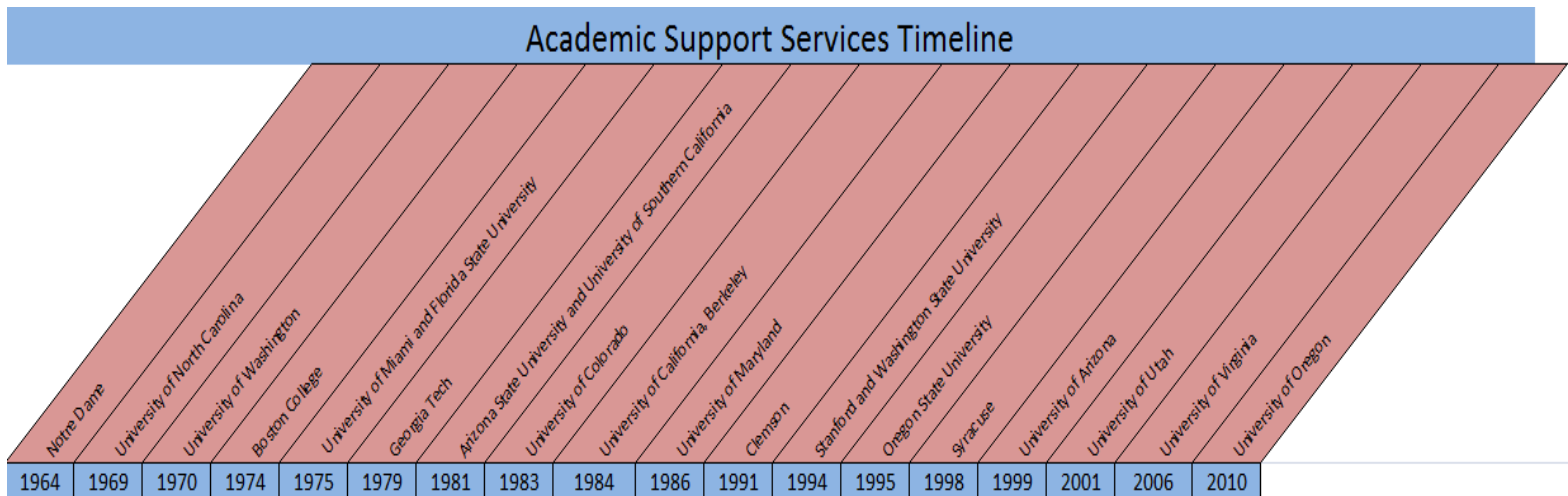
| ACC Schools                  | Pac12 Schools                           |
|------------------------------|---|
| Boston College               | Arizona State University                |
| Clemson University           | Oregon State University                 |
| *Duke University*            | Stanford                                |
| Florida State University     | University of Arizona                   |
| Georgia Tech                 | University of California, Berkeley      |
| *North Carolina State*       | *University of California, Los Angeles* |
| Notre Dame                   | University of Colorado                  |
| Syracuse                     | University of Oregon                    |
| University of Maryland       | University of Southern California       |
| University of Miami          | University of Utah                      |
| University of North Carolina | University of Washington                |
| *University of Pittsburgh*   | Washington State                        |
| University of Virginia       |   |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| *Virginia Tech* |  |
| *Wake Forest*   |  |

**Schools with asterisks did not respond for data collection**

## APPENDIX C

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES TIMELINE



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